

United Nations Sub-regional Workshop on applying *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* for implementing the Regional Action Framework for CRVS in Asia

15 -18 September 2015, Istanbul, Turkey

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The workshop was conducted in partnership with the Institute of Statistics of Turkey, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Statistics Division. Civil registrars and statisticians from the following countries participated: Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Rep. of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan.
2. The participants expressed their appreciation for the organization of the workshop and emphasized that it was very timely taking into consideration the implementation of the Regional Action Framework on CRVS for Asia and Pacific.
3. The workshop welcomed the revised version of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* underlying its importance in terms of setting international standards for civil registration and vital statistics.
4. The full implementation of these international standards is recognized as a goal for all participating countries; nevertheless, there are difficulties and obstacles that vary from one country to the other, ranging from the coverage of civil registration to the completeness of vital statistics.
5. The workshop recognized the whole set of handbooks accompanying the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*, as relevant and valuable reference; at the same time, it concluded that all efforts should be made to produce a guiding material on the use of ICT in civil registration.
6. Visible and tangible improvement of civil registration procedures and coverage has been noted in almost all of the participating countries albeit the levels of modernization and functioning of these systems in different countries was not at the same level. Irrespective, all the participating countries are implementing efforts in term of modernizing civil registration systems. In that context, the participants outlined the need for constant training within the national civil registration systems and concluded this should be strongly emphasized and reflected in these conclusions and recommendations.
7. Vital statistics produced by participating countries varied in terms of comprehensiveness and quality; however, basic vital statistics are produced regularly in all participating countries on the basis of civil registration.
8. The workshop re-iterated the importance of civil registration for a whole range of issues, including the exercise of basic human rights, assigning legal identities to all the citizens and the functioning of the government, aside from its role in terms of producing reliable, regular and comprehensive vital statistics. In that context, the participants welcomed the regional initiatives related to the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Asia and Pacific.
9. The workshop discussed at length the role of civil registration in the process of certification of the causes of death. It noted the international recommendation that this role consists of

ensuring that the certification of the cause of death by a trained medical practitioner is part of the death registration record and as such is transmitted to the statistical office for further processing. Acknowledging that national practices somewhat differ, the workshop concluded that certification and coding of causes of death remains an area of weakness, and that national practices need to be re-visited and possibly adjusted to comply with international standards.

10. In that context, the participants outlined the difficulties that the lack of adequate translation of methodological materials, primarily handbooks accompanying the International Classification of Diseases, rev. 10, poses in terms of fully implementing it. These problems may only be exacerbated with the introduction of the 11th revision, the workshop noted.
11. In discussing the legal framework for a civil registration system the participants noted that national practices differ when it comes to consequences of non-registration, such as fees and other forms of possible administrative responsibilities – including those for delayed registration; however, in all the participating countries the legal framework contained provisions for non-compliance; the workshop concluded that incentives, rather than fines, are a much more efficient tool in improving the coverage of registration, as documented in a number of participating countries.
12. Regarding the assessment of the coverage of civil registration and the quality of vital statistics, the workshop noted that these exercises did not take place in some participating countries for quite some time; it concluded that this issue should be raised once they are back in their respective countries.
13. Coordination at the national level among institutions responsible for civil registration, vital statistics, public health institutions, interior affairs, social services, and a host of other stakeholders remains unsolved in a number of participating countries.
14. The participants acknowledged and welcomed the Regional Action Framework for Asia and the Pacific, an outcome of the Ministerial Conference for Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, held in November 2014. The three goals resonated at the workshop and participants recognized their relevance for participating countries. Furthermore, the workshop engaged in a lively discussion on the process of setting national targets in their respective countries as well as identifying those that might represent a specific challenge. The workshop concluded that this process will continue once participants are back in their capitals; yet they expressed appreciation for having this opportunity to take a close look at these issues.
15. Participants also expressed their interest in having training at the national level on specific methodologies for assessing the quality of their civil registration data and the consequent generation of vital statistics.
16. The afternoon session of the third day of the workshop consisted of a field trip and visit to the Regional Istanbul Office of TurkStat, who provided a detailed demonstration of the process of producing vital statistics from civil registration. The office is a modern facility with a high level of organization and contemporary features. The participants expressed their most sincere appreciation for outstanding hospitality and comprehensive overview of the functioning of the office by its director and his staff.
17. In delivering their presentations on the major obstacles related to the functioning of civil registration systems and the production of vital statistics, as well as responding to regional initiatives, the workshop concluded that for all participating countries these obstacles are well known and are already being addressed at the national level. The workshop also concluded that

the recently developed Regional Action Framework can assist those improvements in a comprehensive manner.